

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

Objective: a structured worksheet to manage alcoholic cravings using the KO'd Method (Knowledge, Observing, and Disarming the urge) can be a helpful tool for those in recovery. The worksheet guides the user through understanding their cravings, observing their effects, and using mindfulness or "urge surfing" techniques to pass through the moment of craving without giving in.

An Overview

HOW TO KNOCK OUT YOUR CRAVINGS

Avoidance and distraction have their place and can help get through tough spots, when the monkey is on your back and urge seemingly has you beat. But if this is all you have in your arsenal, it's only a matter of time before you're swallowed hole. **Really, you need a confrontation.**

We know that the brain puts a high value on immediate gratification. The more you up befriend your urge, and really get to intimately know it, the further the drink becomes. Why? Because you're not giving in. The greater distance between you and the drink, which is largely mental because you're not following the routine the brain sets up, the less value the brain then puts on that game plan (it devalues the drink).

It may sound insane if you're currently going through a craving. But this is how we are by design. The more you expose yourself to the triggers and surf out the urges the easier it gets over time. The physiological process called "**Habitation**" enables you to move from response prevention to response intention. You are responsible for your choices. Yes, urges can influence the difficulty level, but you can do something about it. And we know it, because it's how we are designed!

Habitation is basically the reality that nervous system arousal decreases on repeated exposure to the same stimulus. This is why sex therapists routinely tell their clients to "spice things up," a clever euphemism for doing something different! "This mechanism is hard-wired into the human genetic program. It has clear adaptive value because habituation to familiar stimuli allows more energy to be directed to novel stimuli, hence improving the odds of survival..."Therefore, this is how we are by design. I know we love to think we are all terminally unique but we are more like unique apps on one specific operating system. Right? If it's adaptive then your body and brain by design will see the threat as genuine and will fortify all defenses to ensure that threat is henceforth avoided at all costs. That's why if you are terrified of socializing and you avoid it that it goes from uncomfortable to paralyzing. You've calibrated your design this way. Yet, this is good news! Why? Because if you hold the wrench, then the ball is in your court to change it! Isn't that incredible? The consistent confrontation of the urges eventually results in their demise.

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The Event

START WITH THE BASICS

Situation/Trigger that led to the craving:

Describe the specific event or circumstances that triggered the alcohol craving.

ASSESS THE URGE FROM AN OBJECTIVE STANDPOINT.
THINK OF YOURSELF AS A SCIENTIST ANALYZING AN
OBJECT; A DISPASSIONATE OBSERVER OF SORT

The "K"

KNOW THE URGE

During an alcoholic urge or craving, several physiological and psychological processes occur in the body, primarily influenced by changes in brain chemistry and function related to addiction. Here's an overview of what happens during such a craving:

- **Neurochemical Activity:** The brains of individuals who experience alcohol addiction have adapted to the frequent presence of alcohol. Such adaptations often involve the neurotransmitters, substances that brain cells use to communicate. Cravings are often triggered by reductions in neurotransmitters (such as dopamine, serotonin, and gamma-aminobutyric acid or GABA) that are briefly boosted by alcohol consumption. The craving sensation can be a reflection of the brain's demand for substances to restore these neurochemical levels to the state induced by alcohol.

The KO'd Method

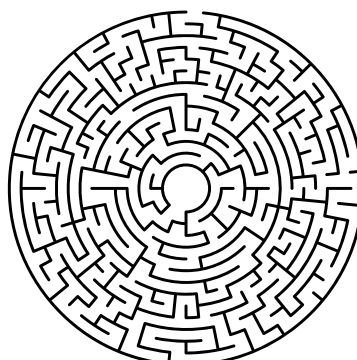
MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The "K"

CONTINUED...

- **Activation of the Reward System:** Alcohol consumption activates the brain's reward system by releasing dopamine, creating a feeling of pleasure or euphoria. During a craving, this reward pathway becomes activated at the thought, sight, or availability of alcohol, generating a strong desire to drink in attempts to recreate those pleasurable effects.
- **Stress Hormone Release:** Cravings can trigger the release of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones can increase heart rate, blood pressure, and tension levels, making the craving experience not only psychologically but also physically uncomfortable.
- **Memory and Environmental Cues:** The brain associates certain environments, people, times, or emotional states with alcohol use based on past experiences. These associations can provoke cravings when similar circumstances occur, as the brain recalls the relief or pleasure alcohol previously provided.
- **Emotional Responses:** Cravings can bring about intense emotional responses, such as anxiety, irritability, or sadness. These emotions might be both a cause and effect of the craving. They are often the result of the body's remembered need for alcohol to cope with emotional situations or stress, reinforcing the urge to drink.
- **Withdrawal Symptoms:** Especially in someone who is dependent on alcohol, the physical symptoms of withdrawal (like shaking, nausea, headache, or sweating) may prompt cravings as the body seeks to alleviate these discomforts through alcohol consumption.

Cravings are complex and involve both the brain's wiring and learned responses to certain cues. They can vary significantly in intensity and duration, influenced by personal history, the length and pattern of alcohol use, and individual physiological factors.



The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The "K"

CONTINUED...

Define the Urge

Describe what you're feeling. What does an urge feel like for you personally?

Identify Misconceptions

List any misconceptions or irrational thoughts you have about the need to consume alcohol.

Explore Triggers

Identify specific triggers or situations that prompt alcohol cravings. Is it stress, social settings, or certain emotions that lead to these urges?

Recognize Patterns

Reflect on past experiences to recognize patterns in your cravings. Understanding why and when cravings occur can provide valuable insights for managing them.

NOTICE THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.
GET TO KNOW THE THOUGHTS; THE OUTLANDISH
COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS THAT ACCOMPANY THE
PHYSIOLOGICAL SENSATIONS.

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The 'O'

OBSERVE THE URGE

NOTICE THE SENSATIONS. OBSERVE THEM.

WATCH THEM COME AND GO.

GET CURIOUS ABOUT THE PHENOMENON.

1. Physical Sensations:

Note down any physical response your body is experiencing as a result of the craving (e.g., increased heart rate, sweating, shaking).

2. Emotional Response:

How are you feeling emotionally? Anxious, frustrated, sad?

3. Intensity of the Urge (Scale 1-10):

Rate the intensity of your craving to monitor its fluctuation.

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The 'd

DISCHARGE THE URGE

THE DISCHARGE IS PROMPTED BY
QUESTIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS.

QUESTIONS TO CRITICALLY THINK THROUGH ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

Identify the Need Behind the Craving

What need do you feel alcohol fulfills for you? Is it relaxation, escape, or something else?

Evaluate the Rationality

What evidence suggests that drinking has been harmful to you in the past? How does that compare to the benefits you believe alcohol provides?

Long-term Consequences:

What long-term consequences could result from giving into this craving? How might it affect your health, relationships, and personal goals?

Alternative Solutions

What are healthier ways you could meet the same needs or feelings that this craving represents?

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The 'd
CONTINUED

QUESTIONS TO CRITICALLY THINK THROUGH ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

Reality Check

How has alcohol affected your life in reality, as opposed to the way it makes you feel in the short term? Are there discrepancies between the two?

Responsibility and Control

What can you control in this moment? Can you choose how you respond to this craving?

Past Strategies

Reflecting on a past success, what did you do to overcome cravings before? What worked and what didn't?



The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

The "d"
CONTINUED

AFFIRMATIONS TO SUPPORT CRITICAL THINKING AND EMPOWERMENT

Self-Acceptance

"I accept my feelings without judgment and choose my actions with intention."

Empowerment

"I am in control of my choices, and I choose recovery."

Health and Well-being

"I prioritize my health and well-being by making choices that support a healthier lifestyle."

Resilience

"Every difficult moment is an opportunity to grow and strengthen my resilience."

Self-Efficacy

"I have the power to change my story. My past does not define my future."

Purpose

"I am motivated by my goals and dreams, which are more important than any temporary urge."

Coping

"I am stronger than my cravings and have the tools to manage them effectively."

Using these questions and affirmations, you can engage more deeply with your experiences of craving, challenge your automatic thoughts about alcohol, and reinforce your capacity to choose your responses. Space has been left for you to pepper in affirmations of your own.

The KO'd Method

MANAGING ALCOHOLIC CRAVINGS

OUTCOME AND REFLECTION

1. Outcome of the Situation:

Did the urge pass? How long did it take? What helped most?

2. Coping Effectiveness:

Assess the effectiveness of the methods used. What worked well and what could be improved for next time?

3. Personal Reflections:

How do you feel after dealing with the craving in this way? Are there new insights or lessons learned?

Congratulations!

**Congratulations on successfully completing The KO'd Method:
Managing Alcoholic Cravings Worksheet!**

Taking the time to delve deeply into understanding, observing, and managing your cravings is a significant step forward in your recovery journey. Each session you complete strengthens your awareness and control, empowering you to make healthier choices and maintain your path toward a fulfilling, sober life.

Well done on your commitment and hard work. Keep using these tools as you continue to grow and face each challenge with resilience. Remember, every step forward is a victory in building a stronger, healthier you. Great job!